Annelida

As the name Annelida suggests, the body is divided into cylindrical rings or segments, with serially arranged organs (Pettibone, 1982). The basic body plan is described as a tube within a tube (Pettibone, 1982). The inner tube, or digestive tract, is separated from the outer tube, or body wall, by a spacious body cavity, or coelom, lined with mesodermal epithelium (Pettibone, 1982). In the North Sea and Wadden Sea, members of this phylum mainly consist of *Polychaeta*, such as Sandworm (*Alitta virens*) and Ragworm (*Hediste diversicolor*) (Gittenberger et al., 2015). One other species of Annelida that is mainly found in the Wadden Sea is the Blow lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) (Gittenberger et al., 2015). In total this study found 48 species of Annelida in the North Sea and Wadden Sea, of which five species are considered non-native (Gittenberger et al., 2015).

History/ Population trends

Annelida have been known and used by humans for thousands of years. In early years of human society, Annelida were predominantly used as bait to catch larger prey (Read, 2019). According to Read, Annelida were only used for human consumption during times of severe famine (2019). However, Annelida were also believed to contain remedial ingredients in their body and were therefore sometimes used in medicine (Read, 2019). The first account of description of a marine species of Annelida, is given to Aristotle, who described them as ‘sea-scolopendra’ (sea-centipedes) (Read, 2019).

Miscellaneous

- Various contaminants tend to settle in or at the bottom of the sea (Watson et al., 2024). Almost all species live in the sediment, with some species even sifting through the sediment in search of small edible parts (Watson et al., 2024). This causes a large buildup of different contaminants in Annelida, which consequently find their way up the food chain when these Annelida are consumed (Watson et al., 2024).
- Sandworms can reach a maximum length of 900mm, making them the largest species of Annelida in the North Sea and Wadden Sea (Alitta virens, 2018).

Diet

- Zooplankton (Alitta virens, 2018; Pettibone, 1982; Watson et al., 2024)
- Detritus (Alitta virens, 2018; Pettibone, 1982; Watson et al., 2024)

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